

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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### CROSS CURRENTS.

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#### CHAPTER XVII.

NOT the faintest allusion was made by Selma during the days that followed to what Helen had said to her on the evening that followed the *matinée*. She was very grave and quiet, but she was not, apparently, distressing herself, and Helen did not approach the subject again until some ten days later.

She had followed Selma to her room then, one night on going up to bed, and had lingered hesitatingly over the fire with a hot colour in her cheeks. She and Humphrey had been dining at the Cornishes—not an unusual circumstance by any means—but this occasion was endued by Helen in all unconsciousness with an indefinable air of mystery and excitement. She moved her foot on the fender, as she warmed it now at Selma's fire, with a great show of interest and attention which betrayed a nervousness singularly unlike her, and at last she said, in a voice which was even unnaturally and aggressively matter-of-fact:

"I've got something to tell you."

Selma was standing by the dressing-table, in her dressing-gown, with her back to Helen. She did not turn round, but she said quite steadily:

"I know what it is."

"You know!" exclaimed Helen, almost as much surprised as she was relieved.

"Why, how can you? I nearly told you when you went out to the theatre to-night, but I thought I would wait!"

"You did tell me all the same! I—you told me two days ago!"

Helen, who had spent the last two days in strenuous efforts to keep from her sister's knowledge the fact of which her own mind was full—the fact that Roger was actually in London—could only gaze at her in blank astonishment. Then speculation, which could profit her nothing, gave place in her mind to the practical question before her, and she said:

"I don't know what you mean, dear; but it doesn't matter. I'm very glad you do know as it hasn't worried you." There was a moment's pause, and then she went on: "He—he's looking very well, Selma. We had—a little talk, and he wanted to know—what you said. I said I thought he had better come here, and I said I would talk to you, and write to him."

"Yes?"

Selma's back was still towards her sister, but Helen was more than satisfied—she was astonished and delighted—at the quiet, unmoved voice which answered her. She instantly decided to ignore the fact that any alternative lay open to Selma, and went on almost easily.

"The best thing will be for him to come here to tea one afternoon—say on Wednesday. I've thought it over carefully, and that seems to me better than lunch or dinner on Sunday. Shall I write and tell him Wednesday, Selma, dear?"

Selma turned round and faced her sister quietly, her face pale and composed.

"Yes," she said, in the same steady voice, "yes, Helen, tell him Wednesday."

She turned away again as she spoke,

and standing before the glass began to unfasten her dark, wavy hair.

Wednesday morning, when it came, seemed to Helen unusually lengthy. She had suffered a good deal in a small way from the difficulties which were always arising from the estrangement between Selma and the Cornishes, and she was proportionately pleased and excited at the prospect of a reconciliation; she was at the same time quite aware that the first meeting between Selma and Roger must necessarily be attended by considerable awkwardness, and she was heartily anxious to have it over.

Selma herself was rather paler than usual, and there was a steady set about her lips which was new to them, and gave her face an added firmness which was very fine. She spent the morning just as she always did, practising and reading in her own room; and she was there practising again at four o'clock, having left Helen secretly marvelling at her calmness.

Half an hour later Helen was still alone in her drawing-room. She had done everything that was possible in the way of arranging and rearranging the room; in her excitement she had in several instances done the same thing two or three times over. Her little tea-table was more than ready, there was absolutely nothing else that she could do, and she was longing for some one to "take off her attention," as she thought, when the door opened, and Selma came quietly into the room. "It is colder this afternoon, I think," she remarked, and seated herself in a low chair at the end of the room farthest from the door. Before Helen could think of anything sufficiently light to be a suitable reply, there was a ring at the front door bell—a ring which caused Helen to start violently, and drop many stitches of the knitting with which she had been composing her mind, but which had no effect whatever upon Selma, and a minute later Helen had risen hastily, and was shaking hands with Roger Cornish.

"I am so glad to see you here," she said, cheerily.

"Thank you," he answered, and then he turned to Selma.

Only a few seconds had passed since the door opened to admit him, but in those seconds Selma had turned from pale to crimson, and from crimson to deathly white. For an instant Helen, glancing at her as Roger turned to her, thought with a horrified sense that there was no ac-

counting for her and that she was going to faint; then she seemed to collect her faculties with a terrible effort of self-command, and held out her hand to him.

"I hope you are well," he said, simply, though his face had flushed to the roots of his hair, and he was far too fully occupied with the awkwardness of the moment to notice that the hand he touched for such a mere second of time was as cold as ice.

"Quite well, thank you."

She sat down again, and Helen, with a delighted sense that the worst was over, threw herself briskly into the breach.

"Humphrey will be down directly," she said. "He is very busy with his Academy picture, and the light has been so bad lately that when there is any he will hardly stir. I'm so glad you have come, Roger, to get him away now. He has had such a long day's work."

"He looks well, I think," said Roger.

"Not so well as he did a month ago, does he, Selma?"

"Not quite. He is so anxious."

That Selma's voice as she answered should be rather low and forced, seemed to Helen not unnatural, and the latter, turning again to Roger, and thinking that if his absence was to be ignored, conversation would be impossible, went on:

"How do you think them all looking at home? Auntie looks well, doesn't she?"

"She looks capital," he answered, heartily, as though the first awkwardness and constraint were slightly wearing off. "Younger than she did, it seems to me. They are all looking well."

"Elsie has grown, hasn't she?"

"Grown!" he replied, "grown doesn't express it in the least! She's like another child."

He turned to Selma, as though to include her in the conversation, and then suddenly and obviously remembered that she had seen none of his family since he went away.

There was an instant's painful pause, broken, to Helen's intense relief, by the opening of the door and the appearance of Humphrey.

"Well, old fellow!" was his characteristically laconic greeting as he shook hands warmly with his brother; and then he took up a position in front of the fire to wait until Helen should have finished pouring out the tea, to which soothing

occupation she had hurriedly applied herself, and went on, lightly and conversationally, with a quick perception of the constraint of the situation which his entrance had broken up:

"I've just been having a terrific encounter with Smith, Helen."

"Oh, Humphrey, you haven't lost him!" she exclaimed, thankfully seizing upon so safe and impersonal a topic. "Smith is a most useful model, Roger, with the face of a perfect saint. Unfortunately, his disposition is anything but saintly, and he was much offended the other day when he arrived in a state of placid intoxication, and Humphrey refused to let him sit or to pay him. What has happened, Humphrey?"

"I reduced him to a state of abject humility," said Humphrey, handing Selma her cup of tea, but not looking directly at her. "I'm immensely proud of myself, I assure you. I had no idea I was so eloquent. But then the fellow is such a capital model, and self-interest is inspiring," he finished, with a laugh.

"How is the picture getting on?" asked Roger, whose embarrassment was disappearing rapidly.

"It will be finished, I hope," answered Humphrey, with a most unusual readiness to speak of his work. "The light has been terribly against us all, of course."

"It is beautiful," said Helen, proudly. "Isn't it, Selma?"

Helen, busy with the teapot, did not look at Selma as she spoke; but Humphrey, who was silently offering her some bread-and-butter, was necessarily looking down at her, and as she lifted her face suddenly, as though startled by the pause, and painfully conscious that something was expected of her without having heard the words she must answer, he met her eyes. It was only for a second, but what he saw made him go on, quickly:

"Selma thinks a great deal too well of it. She's not a judge—the subject caught her fancy. Nell!" breaking off with an exclamation, "that lamp flares. Excuse me, Selma."

He moved quickly before her, and, standing so as to hide her from the rest of the room, turned down the lamp, moving it as he did so, so that a deep shadow fell on her face.

"That's better!" he went on. "When will they give us electric light, I wonder?"

There was little more personal conversation after that. Humphrey, silent as

he was as a rule, could talk as well as most men when he chose, and on this occasion he certainly did choose. He kept the talk mainly on topics on which he and Roger had naturally more to say than women would have, and nobody noticed that Selma did not speak a single word.

Roger, by this time perfectly easy and unconstrained, had just finished a most practical exposition of the American views on a burning international trading question, to which Humphrey had listened with an air of the deepest interest, when he finally rose to go.

"Good-bye, Helen," he said; "I've never told you what a jolly little house this looks."

"I'm so glad you like it, Roger. We must take you over it next time you come. Give them my love at home."

There was a hardly perceptible pause, and then Roger took an envelope from his pocket, and turning to Selma, said, in a simple, straightforward way, though he had flushed hotly again:

"I've brought a note from my mother."

She took it from him as he offered it to her.

"Thank you," she said.

"Good-bye."

She gave him her hand, and Humphrey saw that her lips moved, as though they formed the conventional response; but no words were audible.

"Roger might see the dining-room on his way out," he suggested. "We're rather proud of the oak, old boy. Come and do the honours, Nell."

They went out of the drawing-room, all three together; and when Helen returned, a few minutes later, the room was empty.

Helen hesitated a few minutes, went half-way up to Selma's room, and then stopped.

"I won't go up to her," she decided. "Poor dear! she would rather be left alone."

But Helen's determination to let her sister have her way, and to leave her alone, was not proof against the sight of Selma's face when she came down, half an hour later, to her early dinner—it was perfectly white and set, with dark shadows round the eyes, the eyes themselves were hollow and sunken, and Helen took her incontinently into her arms, and exclaimed:

"My dear, what have you been doing to yourself? Selma, indeed it is quite

wrong to make yourself so miserable over what is past and done with."

Selma disengaged herself quickly, saying hoarsely and incoherently:

"Don't—don't notice me, Helen. I shall—be better."

And Helen, thinking that she would get "better" the more quickly for not being encouraged to dwell upon her feelings, changed the subject briskly, if a trifle incoherently; but the next day she wondered whether she would not have done better to persuade Selma to talk it out with her when she noticed that no practising, no movement of any sort or kind was to be heard in her sister's room during the long hours she spent there alone.

In the course of the evening of that day Tyrrell, who hardly saw Selma during the performance, except upon the stage, unless there was anything particular to be said between them, received a message through her maid, that "Miss Malet would be glad to speak to him." Such interviews between Tyrrell and members of his company were always held in a little room adjoining his dressing-room; and there, on his sending word that he would be very glad to see Miss Malet after the second act, Selma came to him.

Her eyes were unnaturally large and bright, and her fingers twisted the cord of her girdle incessantly. She made no response to his offer of a chair, and began at once, standing before him:

"Mr. Tyrrell, I've come to ask you a great favour."

"You might sit down to ask it, I should have thought," he said, with a smile.

"What is it, Selma?"

"It's a great deal to ask you to do, I know; but—you do think I shall do something some day?"

"I don't quite see the connection of ideas," returned Tyrrell, looking at her curiously. "But to answer your question—you know that I think you may do anything you like."

"I want more work; I'm sure I ought to do more work if I am to be any good," she exclaimed, feverishly. "Mr. Tyrrell, will you give some matinées of old plays every fortnight, every week, as often as you can? I must work!"

"Gently!" ejaculated Tyrrell, with a smile. "Now perhaps you will sit down." He waited until she let herself sink into a chair with a movement of nervous impatience, and then seated himself, and

crossed his legs. "It's rather a large order, Selma," he observed, watching her eager, excited face attentively.

"I know it is," she answered. "Oh, I know! But I thought if you put up old plays that every one in the company knows, it wouldn't be much trouble to them, and it would be hard work for me."

"Ah!" he observed, meditatively. There was a moment's pause, and then he went on, slowly: "Is it work, or is it another success, like Bianca, you want, Selma?"

Selma rose and turned away.

"Mr. Tyrrell," she said, in a voice that was not quite steady, "I thought you understood."

He looked at her in silence for a moment, and then he, too, rose.

"I do understand," he said; "and I will see what can be done." Then, as she turned to him with an eloquent gesture of thanks, he took the hand she held out to him, and held it, as he said: "You are not looking well, Selma, and your hand is much too hot. We must not overwork you."

"No, no! Oh, no!" she exclaimed, almost passionately, as the colour rushed to her cheeks. "It isn't that. It's work that I want—all the work I can get." She stopped abruptly, and then said, with a smile, as if to turn his thoughts away from her: "You would like a change of part, too, wouldn't you? I don't believe you like Juan"—the part he played in "Fedalma." "You don't know how different you were as the monk, and I want to see you like that again."

He dropped her hand suddenly.

"Do you?" he said, with a strange inflection in his voice. "I wonder whether you ever will."

And then Selma's maid came to the door, to tell her that she was called, and they separated.

The note from Mrs. Cornish, which Roger had given to Selma, had contained a few words of forgiveness, perfunctory in spite of all the writer's intentions and resolutions, and extended, as the note said, "because Roger wishes it," and a hope that she would come on the following Sunday to dinner with Helen and Humphrey. Selma showed the note to Helen, and told her in the fewest possible words that she would go, and then wrote to that effect to her aunt.

Her acceptance, a foregone conclusion though it was, produced in the Cornish

household a variety of more or less excited sensations, the most prominent of which was a sense that the Sunday evening in question would be an extremely awkward and unpleasant occasion. Everybody was of opinion that "poor dear Roger was behaving beautifully," and Mrs. Cornish acknowledged that the present state of things must be very disagreeable for Helen; but towards Selma, personally, the family feeling was anything but cordial, and Mrs. Cornish, Sylvia, and Nettie had each individually made a private resolution that on her own part the reconciliation should be very nominal indeed.

They were all, however, very anxious that what Sylvia called "that dreadful evening" should go off as easily as possible; and when Mervyn Dallas, not knowing of the family party in prospect, invited herself to dinner for that particular Sunday, the idea of her presence was hailed with much relief, and she was not allowed to take back her words as she wished to do, being covered with confusion when the ordeal before them all was mysteriously imparted to her.

"It will be a comfort to have some one out of the family," said Nettie—who was not without a certain joy in the excitement of the situation—as she talked it over for the hundredth time with Sylvia.

"Yes," answered Sylvia, "I know." And then, with a vague sense that a less ardent adorer of Selma would have served the purpose better, she added: "I wish it was any one but Mervyn, though."

And Mervyn herself, sensitive little shy thing that she was, wished the same thing from the bottom of her palpitating little heart as she stood on the Cornishes' doorstep on the Sunday evening, trying to make up her mind to ring the bell.

She was keenly alive to the "dreadfulness" of the occasion for every one concerned; she felt it for Mrs. Cornish and the girls, she felt it for Helen, she felt it acutely for her dear Selma.

Perhaps she felt it most of all for the unfortunate on whom her deepest pity had always been bestowed, inasmuch as he had lost Selma, and who had now to be in the same room with her, to speak to her and hear her speak, and know that she would never belong to him.

There was no one in the drawing-room when she was shown in, and she drew a long breath of relief. She had been more than half afraid, though she had started very early in order to avoid such an

entrance, that she might find the whole party assembled. She sat down and tried not to dwell on the situation; but she was quivering from head to foot with sympathetic nervousness, and when the door opened suddenly a few minutes later, the sound made her start violently. It did not tend to compose her nerves that the new-comer should be Roger, of whom she had been thinking at the very moment with the deepest sympathy.

He had not expected to find any one in the room, and he paused a moment in the doorway; then as she rose shyly, and held out her hand to him, he went up and shook it, saying:

"How do you do, Miss Dallas? You ought not to be all alone."

"I like it. I mean—I've only just come, and they'll be down directly," she murmured incoherently, forgetting to sit down again, and standing before him a pretty, quaint little figure in the evening dress which always suited Mervyn better than her heavier morning frocks; there was a bright, soft colour in her brown cheeks born of confusion, and her eyes were liquid and sympathetic.

"What a wretched day it has been!" said Roger, with a passing thought that "little Miss Dallas" was a pretty little girl.

"Yes," answered Mervyn, suddenly remembering that she ought to sit down, and sitting down accordingly with some haste. "Yes, it—it has."

"I'm afraid we must expect some rain, now."

"Yes," said Mervyn, vaguely again.

She was so sorry for him, and it seemed to her so dreadful that he should have to make conversation with her when she was sure he must be wishing her miles away. Roger was very anxious as to the meeting between his mother and Selma, though he felt that for himself the worst was over, and he was not equal to supporting a conversation single-handed; so that, between them, a silence ensued. It was broken by the ringing of a bell, a sound at which Mervyn started nearly off her chair as she and Roger, moved by a common impulse, turned their heads simultaneously and listened. It was a false alarm after all, no sounds as of an arrival succeeded it; but as Roger turned quickly to Mervyn to cover his previous movement with a polite commonplace, he saw her face before she was aware, and its undisguised expression of sympathy, the pitying comprehension

with which the brown eyes met his, made him colour hotly, and turn away, forgetting altogether the words he had intended to speak. He was not a ready dissembler, neither was she, and there was a dead pause. Then Mervyn's feelings became altogether too much for her; and, quite carried away by them, she clasped her hands impulsively together on her knee, and said, softly:

"Oh, Mr. Cornish, I am so dreadfully sorry! I've been so dreadfully sorry for you all the time; because I know what she is."

Her little shaking voice failed her for pure pity, and there was another pause; then Roger moved to the mantelpiece, and stood there with his back to her as he said, simply:

"There's no one in the world like her."

"I know there isn't," cried Mervyn, impulsively. "I love her more than any one in the world, and I've been so dreadfully sorry for you. Oh, and it hurts so that people should think hardly of her, and be unkind to her."

Her tone assumed that he had felt that pain, and he answered it quickly, turning to her abruptly.

"It's worse than anything," he said.

"They seem to think it a comfort to a fellow to hear her run down—the best and most beautiful—because—because—I made a mistake. Why, it was my fault, not hers. I ought to have understood that she was far too good for me, and not have bothered her into thinking—into thinking that she cared!"

"It was a dreadful mistake for her to make," said Mervyn; "but—she couldn't help it."

"That's what I've said! That's what I've said all the time!" cried Roger, eagerly. "Miss Dallas," he went on, rapidly, coming up to her where she sat, with her little face uplifted to him, "there's—there's this evening. I'm afraid it will be rather awkward—my mother, you know, and Sylvia. You'll—you'll do your best, won't you? I shall be so glad to know there's a woman here who thinks of things as I do. Even Helen is a little hard on her. At least, she feels—she feels——"

He stopped, having got himself into an awkward position. "Responsible," was the word which conveyed what he meant, and he could not bring himself to say it. But Mervyn did not wait for him to finish.

"Of course I shall do my very best," she said, impetuously. "There isn't anything I wouldn't do to save her the least little uncomfortableness."

She held out her hand with a quick, quaint little gesture, as one who seals a compact, and he shook it heartily. A moment later, Mrs. Cornish, Sylvia, and Nettie, all looking more or less flushed and nervous, came in in a body.

The actual arrival was very simple, after all. Mrs. Cornish had said in her letter that "by-gones were to be by-gones"; and when Mr. and Mrs. Humphrey Cornish and Miss Malet were eventually announced, Selma followed her sister into the room, looking very pale, but perfectly self-possessed. She said the word or two that was necessary in answer to her aunt's greeting in a low voice, but perfectly steadily, and received the stiff kisses with which Sylvia and Nettie met her with less apparent embarrassment than they were given. If she clung to Mervyn as she kissed her, before shaking hands with Roger, an instant longer than was necessary, nobody but Mervyn knew it.

But the minutes that ensued before dinner was announced were as dreadful as could have been anticipated. Humphrey talked, and Roger talked, and Mervyn, catching Roger's eye, plunged energetically, if incoherently, into the conversation. Mrs. Cornish and Sylvia felt as though every idea had temporarily left them, and the observations they contributed were not calculated to promote conversation. Helen was far too much occupied in watching Selma to make any attempt at speech, and the only person who answered any remark quietly and reasonably was Selma herself, who grew whiter with every moment, her sister thought. Dinner was decidedly less embarrassed and constrained; but things were, if possible, still worse in the drawing-room after dinner, when Helen, Selma, Mrs. Cornish, and the three girls were alone together. Mervyn did her very utmost; but when at last the door opened, she did not know how deeply relieved was the glance she threw towards Roger. She felt that they would make common cause together.

An hour passed, and then, to her unspeakable relief, Helen heard the clock strike ten, and rose.

"I'm afraid we must go, auntie," she said. "May we have a cab? Our things are in the hall."

In the general movement that ensued,

Mervyn and Roger, as though drawn together by the sympathy which had grown up between them during the evening, with the sense that they were playing into one another's hands with a common object in view, found themselves standing together. There was a perceptible hesitation on the part of Sylvia and Nettie as to which should go with Helen and Selma into the hall, which ended in their both going, as well as Mrs. Cornish. Mervyn and Roger, left alone, followed them out with one accord, appearing in the hall just as Selma turned to say good-bye to Mrs. Cornish, and faced them. It seemed strange to Helen that her sister should say good-bye to her aunt and cousins far less naturally than she had met them; and she followed Selma quickly as she went rapidly down the steps. At the bottom, Helen turned.

The hall door was wide open, and Roger was holding it, his tall, strong figure standing out distinctly as he stood in the full stream of light from the hall gas; next him, the only other figure in full light—a slight, childish little outline—stood Mervyn Dallas.

"Good night!" Helen called back.

"Good night!" responded Roger's voice; and Mervyn's echoed it.

When Helen was seated by her sister in the cab, Selma's head was turned away from the now closed door, and Helen did not see her face.

### THE ASTEROID QUESTION.

It had long been suspected that something was missing from the solar system in the wide gap which lies between Mars and Jupiter; but when Ceres, Pallas, Juno, and Vesta were revealed to the world as miniature planets revolving between the orbits of those two above-named planets, it was hardly supposed that they were only four out of a countless, or at least as yet uncounted, family, which now amounts to more than three hundred in number. And still they come, until their increase has absolutely grown into a sort of astronomical nuisance.

The "Berliner Jahrbuch" proposed, last year, to ignore utterly and to take no further notice of the existence of any discovered after the two hundred and eighty-seventh, until the end of the present century. True, it has promised to follow the courses of the most interesting. But will

those observers be certain to recognise that any new asteroid will prove interesting from this or that point of view; whether, for instance, it will pass near enough to Jupiter to experience considerable perturbations, or near enough to the earth to help astronomers in thence deducing the sun's parallax?

The existence of previously unknown little planets has been proved, and we cannot get rid of or neglect them, although it takes millions of them to make a mass as big as the earth; in astronomy, no quantity or object, however small, can be neglected. It is conceivable that, in consequence of their multitude, they have had to go begging for names—M. Camille Flammarion had to stand sponsor for Nos. 87, 107, 154, and 169, and some names they have received are queer enough—other asteroids still remain in the novitiate condition of numbers.

The whole swarm of new-found planets lies between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter—a very wide zone; for it is not less than seventy millions of leagues from the perihelion of the little planet Flora, which approaches nearest to the sun, and the aphelion of the most distant, Sylvia—an immense extent of space, equalling double the distance of the earth from the sun.

Scarcely a year now passes without astronomers, always on the watch, finding fresh asteroids, either while expressly searching for them, or more frequently while not looking out for them, when busy mapping stars near the ecliptic. On noting the stars to be included in the map, they remark a star which was not there the day before; its position is attentively examined, and they ascertain that it is not a fixed star proper, but a planet. There is no difference in their aspect; for all these little planets are telescopic, invisible to the naked eye, and are not brighter, on the average, than a star of the tenth magnitude; some are even smaller. Three good observations of the new little planet furnish the necessary basis for calculating its distance and the position of its orbit in space. The result has always been to place it between Mars and Jupiter.

On the first of January, 1801, the astronomer Piazzi, observing at Palermo, discovered, by chance, the first little planet, Ceres, to be shortly followed by the finding of Pallas, Juno, and Vesta, by Olbers and Harding. These four surpass

in size and brightness the mean of the other asteroids; Vesta, the most brilliant of them all, attains even the sixth magnitude when nearest to the earth, and becomes visible by the naked eye. Its diameter is estimated at about two hundred and fifty miles; W. Herschell makes it less. Pallas, Juno, and Ceres are of about the same volume. Although these four are the largest asteroids, it will be seen that they are much smaller than our moon.

People were quite content with their four new planets. Nobody asked for more of them; and, during thirty-eight years, not a single new asteroid was found. The discovery of the fifth, *Astrea*, in 1845, was once more due to chance. Since then they form a formidable list of numbers, dates, discoveries, and titles. It will be easily understood that the size of the more recently found planets should go on decreasing. Those discovered now rarely exceed the thirteenth magnitude. It was W. Herschell who, remarking the smallness of the first, suggested that the name of "planets" did not suit them, and that it would be better to call them "asteroids."

The four first-named, more especially, have furnished M. Camille Flammarion with an apt occasion for the scientific exercise of his brilliant imagination. The first thing which strikes us, he writes, is the trifling amount of the mass or weight of these tiny heavenly bodies—the slightness of their density, and of the force of gravity at their surface. Their attraction, consequently, is without energy; objects weigh almost nothing on their surface. According to Sir John Herschell, in his "Outlines of Astronomy," a man placed on one of these planets could jump to a height of sixty feet, and would fall with a shock not greater than if he had leaped two feet on earth.

A flea might skip off into outer space, to alight upon, if possible, and colonise another minor planet. Pray, gentle reader, don't take this as an ill-timed or misplaced pleasantry. You will see, by-and-by, the reason why it is not so. Giants could exist on such worlds as those. Enormous animals, which are only found here in the waters of the ocean, where they lose a portion of their weight, could live and run about with facility on the soil of one of the four minor planets.

Moreover, the attraction which maintains them in the state of individual unities is so weak that a volcano on the

planet Juno might certainly shoot out solid materials as far as the planet *Clotho* (No. 97), for it could start them with so great a velocity that they could not be drawn back by the feeble attraction of their own proper sphere, and might well be directed to the orbit of *Clotho*, which lies within a distance of no more than two hundred and sixty leagues from that of Juno.

Given, then, the extreme feebleness of weight on the surface of these little worlds, we may assume that, whatever may be the natural products of their soil, the dimensions of the things that live and grow there must considerably exceed those of terrestrial plants and animals. Those things and creatures are not restrained by the chain of energetic attraction which fastens and confines them to the soil. All the expansive forces of Nature, all the powers of vitality, are developed there without check or limit.

If we were sure that organic forces were the same there as here, we might assume with certainty the existence of beings of loftier stature than we have on earth, and at the same time lighter and more active. But as it is certain that vital energy, considered in itself, varies from one planet to another, in consequence of the differences of temperature, the chemical composition of the atmosphere and of living bodies, of the density of the substances which enter into the composition of organised bodies, we cannot positively affirm this gigantic stature to exist, although we may regard it as possible and even probable in our speculations on interplanetary comparative anatomy.

A telescopic examination of these Lilliputian worlds shows, on the other hand, that several of them are not spherical globes, but irregular, many-sided in their shape—a form which must diversify their soil with strange mountains and fantastic valleys, a fall down whose precipices would be terrible were the action of weight not so trifling. Some of them, notably *Pallas*, *Ceres*, *Vesta*, *Juno*, *Iris*, *Pales*, and *Victoria*, present considerable variations of brightness in proof of their polyhedral form, and tending also to suggest the existence of great meteorological variations in their atmospheres. Those atmospheres are not so deep as was supposed, from imperfect observations, at the beginning of the present century; but their existence has been verified on several, as on *Vesta*, by spectral analysis.

It seems doubtful, however, to M. Flammarion, whether all the minor planets are inhabited—by whatsoever beings, human, animal, vegetable, or others—but he believes it certain that “several of them are completely so, quite as much as the planet on which we are now living.”

The explosion theory has long been a favourite speculation in respect to the origin of the asteroids. It would have been difficult for M. Flammarion to refrain from giving it prominence in his interesting and exhaustive volume, “*Les Terres du Ciel*.” The formation of these innumerable little worlds, he says, seems due to the derangement which Jupiter’s powerful attraction caused in the creation of this zone of the solar system, by preventing the subsistence of a considerable nebulous ring, and by separating it, little by little, into fragments. Perhaps, also, a certain number of these small stars proceed from the breaking-up of a planet, brought about by the action of internal or external force—an accident by no means impossible, and which might very well happen, one of these days, to ourselves.

“Such being the astronomical conditions of those miniature worlds, who can guess what unimaginable forms Life may not assume in these singular localities? In case the disruption of one or several planets should have allowed the germs of vitality to survive, they would have been the starting-point of new floras and new faunas strangely different from their predecessors, in consequence especially of the diminished intensity of weight or gravitating force.”

But might, indeed, such an accident happen to ourselves? There is a wonderful difference between “might” and “is likely to.” If the interior of the earth were hollow, and at the same time incandescent; if the ocean could find a convenient opening in the terrestrial shell through which to pour itself inside, the earth might certainly explode, by the force of the steam so generated, exactly as when the boiler of a steam-engine blows up.

And what would become of the bits?

They would be shot into space, to inoculate other globes with the germs of life, exactly as a President of the British Association once suggested that we ourselves received the first elements of vitality. But his hearers hardly believed his theory. I may say they scarcely believed that he believed it himself.

If people are not satisfied with the narrative of Genesis—expanded, but not improved, by Milton in his “*Paradise Lost*”—would it not be better and more dignified to say, frankly: “We do not know. It is beyond our comprehension; past our finding out. We are utterly ignorant, and can offer no acceptable solution of the mystery?”

In the Scientific Notices appended to this year’s “*Annuaire*” of the Bureau des Longitudes, Monsieur F. Tisserand strongly protests against the exclusion of asteroids from official astronomical records, for reasons too long and too technical to be reproduced in their entirety here. And the Bureau des Longitudes, struck by the difficulties which must arise from that decision, has thought of remedying them in a certain measure, by giving extension to its Bureau des Calculs.

M. Tisserand states that Olbers, after discovering the second small planet, Pallas, and finding that it might, with time, pass close to Ceres, concluded thence that both of them might be the fragments of a larger planet broken and split in two by internal convulsion—an idea which has been already mentioned. He compares the asteroids, in some respects, to periodical comets; he shows that they wheel round the sun in swarms, with distinct intervals between them, like those which separate Saturn’s rings from each other.

Can the hypothesis of Olbers be maintained? The answer, unfortunately, is negative. An interesting study of the orbits of the forty first-found asteroids was undertaken by Newcomb. He immediately saw that, such as they are at present, they are far from passing through or crossing at one identical point or track. It might be supposed that that condition was fulfilled at a certain distant epoch, and that it had subsequently been disturbed by perturbations occasioned by the older planets, notably by Jupiter and Saturn. But calculation has pronounced its verdict; the required condition has never existed, and the theory of Olbers must be abandoned.

The asteroids have been the cause of important progress in the art of astronomical observation. The search for them has trained first-class observers. Piazzi, we know, discovered at Palermo, on the first day of the present century, a star which he believed to be a small comet, and which he observed several times up to the eleventh of February following, when

a serious illness compelled him to discontinue astronomical work. Bode was the first to ascertain that the new star could not be a comet.

When Piazzi got well again, he was unable to find the position of Ceres. All that was known was that it must be sought for towards the end of the year, at its emergence from the blinding rays of the sun. At this juncture, Gausse, then only twenty-four years of age, set to work, and in less than a month invented an admirable method, which enabled him to calculate the elements of Ceres' elliptic orbit, thanks to which Olbers found the missing star on the first of January, 1802.

In order to follow the minor planets with greater facility, extra-powerful instruments have been constructed—amongst others, the great Meridian Circle in the Paris Observatory. With the same object, celestial maps and catalogues of the stars have advanced considerably nearer to perfection.

For a multitude of reasons, then, M. Tisserand thinks that the search for fresh asteroids ought to be continued. No doubt it calls for long and complicated calculations; but they might be divided between several scientific establishments. At any rate, the Bureau des Longitudes is ready to take its share in the labour.

### THE LAND OF BRUCE.

WHAT is here meant particularly by the Land of Bruce is the old kingdom of Carrick, one of the three great divisions of the romantic and historic county of Ayr. The most northern of these districts is known as Cunninghame, and was of old the territory of the family of that name. The middle district, lying between the rivers Irvine and Doon, is Kyle—the Land of Burns. The southernmost division, which extends from the River Doon, whose banks and braes Burns has immortalised, to the borders of the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright and Wigton, is Carrick, the ancestral home of "The Bruce."

Every mile of the district of Carrick is stored with historic memories, and every mile of it is beautiful. It is an undulating land of billowy green hills, fertile plains, and rich woods, flanked by a long, wild, rocky shore, on which expire the Atlantic rollers, after being denuded of their might by the interception of the peninsula of Kintyre opposite.

Gazing seaward from the Carrick shore, the eye takes in a vast and magnificent panorama, from the dark peaks of Arran, down the long slopes of Kintyre, and away over the wide waste of waters to the Irish coast, which banks like a cloud on the horizon. But the distinctive feature in the sea-prospect is the lonely giant-mass of Ailsa Craig, uprising sheer from the waves in solitary grandeur. Surely this is one of the most picturesque objects on all our rock-bound coasts—certainly it is one of the most impressive—once seen to dwell for ever in the memory. There is, indeed, something weird in its outline, even by daylight, suggestive as it is of the terrors of storm and shipwreck, and of absolute loneliness. In the gloom of night it becomes doubly mysterious, with the watchful eye of its lighthouse—the only habitable dwelling on its two miles of rocky circumference—blinking solemnly across the far stretch of sea.

Everybody, of course, knows the pyramidal shape of the Rock of Ailsa, otherwise called "Paddy's Milestone," and naturalists know it as the haunt of myriads of sea-fowl of all descriptions, whose breakfasts alone, it is calculated, require the extraction of fifteen tons of fish per day from the surrounding waters. Only those who have dwelt within sight of it know its power to fascinate the senses. Keats felt something of its influence which he tried to express in the sonnet composed on a visit to the Land of Burns:

Hearken, thou craggy ocean pyramid,  
Give answer by thy voice—the sea-fowl's  
screams—  
When were thy shoulders mantled in huge  
streams?  
When, from the sun, was thy broad forehead hid?  
How long is't since the mighty Power bid  
Thee heave to airy sleep from fathom dreams?  
Sleep in the lap of thunder or sunbeams?  
Or when grey clouds are thy cold coverlid?  
Thou answer'st not, for thou art dead asleep,  
Thy life is but two dead eternities:  
The last in air, the former in the deep!  
First with the whales, last with the eagles' skies!  
Drown'd wast thou till an earthquake made thee  
sleep,  
Another cannot wake thy giant size!

There is a noble theme both for poet and artist in this Titan of the deep—rock-warden of the Carrick shore—but we must break away from its spell for the present, and pursue our way along that shore.

One long stretch of it, of some twenty miles from Turnberry Point to Benane Head, forms a deep indentation, opposite about the centre of which the Rock of Ailsa rises from its ocean-bed some twelve

miles from the nearest point of the mainland. At Turnberry Point we stand upon ground which is sacred to Scotchmen, for here was born Robert the Bruce. At this day there flashes nightly from the headland where the redeemer of Scotland drew his first breath, a white stream of light, cheering, dazzling, unailing, from sunset to sunrise, to guide the busy mariners and fishermen who throng these waters. Once there was a light of another sort blazing on Turnberry, as we shall presently see.

Just beneath the lighthouse are the massive remains of the old feudal Castle which aforetime crowned the rocky cape, even as its Lords dominated the surrounding region. It was admirably placed for defence, and for the exercise of controlling power by land and sea. On three sides it was fortified naturally by water, and the foundations of the Castle were so built into the rock that it is hard to say where the work of Nature ended, and that of the architect began. From the centre of the Keep, a secret subterranean passage led to the sea.

As to when or by whom Turnberry Castle was built in the dim and distant past, there seems to be no authentic record; but it was originally a stronghold of the Lords of Galloway, and from them passed into the possession of the Earls of Carrick, about the beginning of the thirteenth century. Here the Earls, or Kings, as they are often called in local history, of Carrick maintained an almost regal state for over a hundred years, holding sway over countless knights and squires bound to do suit and service for their feudal lords.

Then came a romantic episode in the history of the race. By the death of her father, the fair and impetuous Marjory, or Martha, became Countess in her own right, and absolute mistress of her hand and fortune. She was young, and doubtless beautiful—on whom should she bestow them? Chance decided for her. One memorable morning, when hunting with her lords and ladies in the neighbouring woods, she encountered a stranger knight of handsome mien, and noble lineage. Strangers were not always welcome in those parts—and Normans were not usually among the most acceptable guests—but the Countess was smitten at first sight, and persuaded the somewhat reluctant stranger to tarry in her Castle for a while. He came, he saw, and she

conquered, for in due time the Lady of Carrick led the Norman knight to the altar.

Who, then, was this handsome stranger in the kingdom of Carrick? His name was Robert de Bruis, or Bruyse, son of the Earl of Annandale, who claimed descent from the brother of William the Lion, and was, therefore, of Royal pedigree. It was the father of our knight who, on the death of the young uncrowned Queen, called the Maid of Norway, competed for the crown with John Baliol, Lord of Galloway, and lost by the decision of King Edward the First of England in favour of Baliol. It was the son of our knight who, in later years, summarily disposed of the claims of the Red Comyn, and secured the independence of Scotland once more.

The son of this Robert of Annandale and Marjory of Carrick was The Bruce—King Robert the First of Scotland. That he was born in Turnberry Castle the people of Carrick positively maintain, in spite of some of the historians who indicate another birthplace. That his boyhood was spent here, there is no doubt; and the traditions of the beloved redeemer of Scotland cling about these walls as tenaciously as the ivy.

Then it was here, at Turnberry, that the nobles of Scotland assembled to discuss the succession when Robert was only twelve years old. They decided in favour of his grandfather; but he was set aside by English Edward in favour of Baliol, and died ten years later with his hopes of kingship unrealised.

Every schoolboy knows, however, how The Bruce—the third, or, as some say, the fourth “Robert” of that ilk—drove the English out of Scotland, secured the crown for himself, and founded the dynasty of the Stuarts. But it is as the Earl of Carrick that we are interested in him just now, and we are not going to follow him to Bannockburn.

When Bruce left Carrick to pursue his claim to the throne, he must have been somewhere about thirty years of age, as he was born in 1274. In 1306 he was, rather prematurely, crowned at Scone, and almost immediately became a fugitive. He was excommunicated by the Pope for the murder of Comyn, hemmed in by the forces of English Edward, who defeated him at Methven, and deserted by his friends. Then he had months of dismal and dangerous wanderings in the Highlands, and finally reached Rathlin Island,

on the Irish coast, and there he passed the winter.

Now, Rathlin Island is within view of the Carrick shore, and it was natural that the eyes of Bruce should be turned with longing towards his ancestral halls. But Turnberry was now in possession of an English garrison under Lord Percy, and Bruce was kept out of his own house, as well as out of his kingdom. He crossed from Rathlin to Arran, and, still in sight of Turnberry, began to open negotiations with his friends in Carrick.

He sent over a faithful follower, called Cuthbert, with instructions to sound the men of Carrick quietly, and when they were all prepared for a rising, to light a beacon on Turnberry Head. Night after night Bruce paced the beach in Arran, anxiously watching for the signal, with his two or three hundred followers all ready to spring into the boats they had collected when the beacon blazed.

It blazed at last, and then began the famous crossing as told by Scott in the "Lord of the Isles."

Yet, strange to say, the Castle garrison were not disturbed. Scott gives a supernatural explanation of the light; but the truth seems to have been that some one was burning heather on the headland, and Bruce mistook the fire for the signal of his confederate. Cuthbert met him on the shore with the doleful tidings that the people were so afraid of Lord Percy's army that they would not rise.

According to Scott's poem, Bruce at once attacked the Castle, and, putting the garrison to the sword, regained his own house the next morning. According to history, however, he had to pass many days in ambush and in skirmishing before he succeeded. According to local tradition, he went to hide in the neighbouring caves of Culzean, or Colean, and one dark night marched his band in silence across to Turnberry, surprised the outposts, and took possession, only to be driven out again by an army which Percy summoned from Ayr.

Although Bruce did eventually in turn drive Percy out of Carrick, he had to keep himself concealed in his own earldom for a long time, and many are the stories told of his adventures and narrow escapes here. It was somewhere in this region, too, that he defended a pass single-handed against a band of Galloway men, rather than break the much-needed repose of his own followers. But Fortune turned her

wheel in his favour at last. A series of victories began at Loudon Hill, which led up to the crowning victory of Bannockburn, and left him undisputed King of Scotland. Thenceforward we find him no more in Carrick, and he was the last Earl of Carrick who resided at Turnberry; but the title is still borne by his descendant, the present Prince of Wales.

What Turnberry was like in those days we may allow Scott to tell us:

Soft swept in velvet green  
The plain, with many a glade between,  
Whose tangled alleys far invade  
The depth of the brown forest shade.  
Here the tall fern obscured the lawn,  
Fair shelter for the sportive fawn;  
There, tufted close with copsewood green,  
Was many a swelling hillock seen;  
And all around was verdure meet  
For pressure of the fairies' feet:  
The glossy hollow lined the park,  
The yew-tree lent its shadow dark,  
And many an old oak, worn and bare,  
With all its shivered boughs was there.

But we do not see any of that now except the "verdure meet." In fact, the post warns us,

Seek not the scene—the axe, the plough,  
The boor's dull fence have marr'd it now.

But there are beauties remaining, nevertheless. There is a long fair stretch of wind-swept grass-land leading up to the promontory, now crowned by the light-tower, and there are magnificent prospects of land and sea from its summit. It was on this cape, too, that the only witch in history who did a good action once wove her spells for the destruction of the Spanish Armada. This was Elcine de Aggart, and as the ships came round the Mull of Kintyre, she began to unwind a great ball of blue yarn. She went on unwinding until a great storm arose, and every ship went down before the eyes of the terrified inhabitants of the Carrick coast.

Just beyond the promontory to the north is the picturesque village of The Maidens—a group of white cottages separated by a stretch of greensward from the dazzling beach of a remarkably pretty and well-sheltered bay. Here dwells a small colony of quiet fisher-folk, under the shelter of the guardian eye of Turnberry Light; but in the sands not many years ago were found a number of battle-axes, silent witnesses of previous conflicts in this peaceful retreat. Indeed, if we are to believe the venerable Boece, there was once in Maiden's Bay a great British city called Carretonium, with high walls and

towers, and all the luxuries of the civilisation of a pre-historic period. One likes to think of this ancient city, and to strive to recall its magnificence; but there is little to help, save one's imagination. And that receives rather a rude check from old Boece when he proceeds to set up here a King Caractacus, from whom the district of Carrick, he says, received its name. There may have been such a King here; but it is curious that no one ever heard of him in these parts except Boece.

Just inland from this, however, we come to a place which has given a name to one of the immortals. This is Shanter Farm, where Burns made the acquaintance of one Douglas Graham, whom he transformed into Tam, and sent forth to the world for all time as Tam O'Shanter. Not far from this, again, is the house called Glenfoot, where lived Souter Johnnie, known to his contemporaries, however, as plain John Davidson the shoemaker.

The northern arm of the Maiden's Bay is a fine wooded promontory, not so long as Turnberry, but with a bolder front of precipitous rock. Here the woods spread from sea-marge to hill like a forest, and embowered in them is the Castle of Culzean, the seat of the Marquis of Ailsa. This is one of the show-places of this part of Scotland, and is remarkable alike for the picturesqueness of its situation and the beauty of its trees, gardens, and rockeries.

The Castle rises sheer from the perpendicular sea-cliffs, beneath which are the caves before-mentioned. There are six of them, and the tide rises to the level of the largest, which runs inland for about two hundred feet, and is quite fifty feet high. The entrance has been built up with freestone, so as to leave a narrow doorway, and there is every indication, besides tradition, that the caves were often used as secret habitations in times past. When Bruce was here there was no castle at Culzean, for the present edifice was built in 1777; but long before that the Kennedies had a dwelling of some sort near.

The Kennedies of Cassillis, however, of whom Lord Ailsa is the present representative, had their stronghold at Dunure, some six miles to the north, and also on a sea-cliff, after which they had Cassillis Castle, more inland.

The Kennedies of Cassillis were always at feud with the Kennedies of Bargany—another ancient Carrick stronghold—and it was during one of these feuds that Mure

of Auchendrane, an ally of the Bargany section, murdered Sir Thomas Kennedy of Culzean, and afterwards a young Dalrymple, who was the only witness of the crime. The murder of Dalrymple occurred on the shore to the south of Turnberry, at a farm called Chapeldonan; and the place where the body was buried on the sand, only to be washed bare by the vengeful sea, is still pointed out.

This incident was employed by Scott in his not very successful tragedy of "Auchendrane." But, indeed, the stories of the feuds of the Kennedies are endless in Carrick, and would afford material for many romances. Scott was not at his best when he wrote "Auchendrane," or he would have made more of the striking incidents of the story he tried to utilise. The curious reader who wishes to learn more of these strange family feuds may consult Pitcairn's "Historie of the Kennedies," or Robertson's more recent and more imaginative "Kings of Carrick."

Our object, however, was to view the Land of Bruce, not that of the Kennedies, and for this reason we must pause short of the Abbey of Crossraguel, although we are within a few miles of it. This abbey was founded by King Duncan in 1260, and is one of the most complete and well preserved ecclesiastical remains in Scotland. But, indeed, all the Land of Carrick is stocked as richly with scenes of historic interest as it abounds in beauty of woodland, mead, and river, of wide-spreading strands, and of bold, rocky shores.

## A ROUGH ROAD.

### A COMPLETE STORY.

YES, I always take the old road from the bottom of the valley to our village, perched up on the heights, instead of the new one which goes round the other side of the hills. No doubt the new road is shorter, better, and more gradual; and when there was first talk of making it, I was as pleased as any one to think of the time and trouble it would save us. But before it was finished I wished, from the bottom of my heart, that it had never been begun. No, I have never made use of it yet, never, and, what is more, I never shall. If you like, I will tell you why. It is so old a story now that most people have forgotten it.

Twenty years ago there was not such another handsome girl in all the country round

as my daughter Léonie. She was the youngest, the flower of the flock. She was the last fledgling left in the nest after the elder ones had married and left us; and though she had always been the hardest of all to manage, we were in no hurry for her to go. I have only to shut my eyes, and I see her still: her white forehead, and her little pink ears peeping out from her curly hair; her big brown eyes full of life; her saucy nose bidding you mind your p's and q's when you bandied words with her; and her firm, well-curved mouth and chin which said as plainly as words, "I've not come across my master yet, and I doubt if I ever shall."

People sometimes told us we had spoilt her and made her wilful; but at that I shook my head. It was no spoiling that had made her what she was; and with all her faults she was still a good daughter, nor was there a girl in the village who could hold a candle to her for pretty ways. You needn't take my word alone for it; ask any one, whose memory can go back so far, who it was that all the lads in the place were in love with in those days, and if they tell the truth they will say Léonie Corsean, the daughter of the landlord of the "Epée d'Or."

Her mother and I often talked over the likelihoods of her marriage. It seemed a pity that, with a good dowry and lots of admirers, she should let the time go on too far; for at the time I am speaking of she was turned three-and-twenty.

"Which of 'em do you mean to take, child?" I'd say to her sometimes, when one young fellow or another had been trying to make himself more agreeable than usual; "which of 'em is to carry off my little lass, and be landlord of the 'Epée d'Or' when I retire into private life?"

For I meant Léonie's husband to have the goodwill as part of her dowry.

"I hope it'll be a long while before any one comes to carry me off," she'd answer; "and I'm sure there's no need yet to talk of the 'Epée d'Or' changing landlords."

"Nor there is, lassie; but the time'll come some day, and when it does it is to be hoped the right man'll be in the right place; for instance, such a one as Jacques Lambert."

Yes, I had a great wish to see her take the son of my old chum, the quarryman, Lambert. He was as good-looking a man as you would need to look for; broad-shouldered and stalwart, with a military

air about him, which he had picked up when he served his time in the army. I'd known him from his babyhood, and I'd often thought he was just the one to step into my shoes at the "Epée d'Or." His father and I had spoken of it more than once.

"He'll make a rare good husband for your girl," his father had said; "he's got just that about him that a headstrong girl will give in to. His only fault is that he's a bit jealous; but if she doesn't provoke him in that way, she'll never know in how far he's her master."

"She's not all that hard to manage, Lambert," I said.

"She's not all that easy, Corsean; which you know well, if you'd confess. Still, I'd like to have her for a daughter-in-law."

What Léonie thought of Jacques was not so plain to see. When I brought his name into such a talk as I've mentioned above, she mostly laughed and tossed her head. She wasn't, however, the girl to tell her secrets, and she often passed her deeper feelings off with a joke. It was not time yet to talk of it seriously, so I contented myself with watching them, and giving him a word of encouragement from time to time.

At last the day came when young Jacques Lambert came to me with a bashful look on his handsome, sunburnt face, and asked me if I thought really he would do for a husband for Léonie.

"And what else could I think, lad?" I cried. "Why, you're cut out for her. If I hadn't felt sure of that, you'd have had the cold shoulder here instead of the warm welcome I've always given you. It's just what I've been wishing for; and your father is of my mind. Only, mark you, not all the fathers, nor mothers either, in the land, could say the last word for my Léonie. You must go to her yourself for that."

Then he went a bit redder, and looked down.

"I've heard what she's got to say," he began; then he stopped.

"Well," I said, "she didn't say you nay, or you'd have let the matter drop?"

"She didn't say me nay," he answered; "she said she had nothing against me, and I might come and ask you if you wanted me for a son-in-law."

"It wasn't quite the sort of answer you'd have liked," I said; "but that's her way. You mustn't expect her to leave off teasing you yet awhile. She's a good

girl, though she does put on that manner."

"But do you think she loves me, Père Corseau?" he asked. "If she'd say she loved me, she might tease me as much as she likes."

"Of course she loves you, lad," I said; "but she's not the one to give herself all at once. You'll have to let her drop her independence by degrees. We won't talk of the marriage just yet; but you'll see, when the time comes, you'll have as loving a wife as any one could desire."

When I talked to her she said but little; certainly she made no mention of love.

"I've nothing against him," she repeated; "and you are always saying it is time I married."

"That's no reason for taking Jacques Lambert," I said, "if there's any one you like better."

"There's no one I like better. I don't suppose I ever shall like any one better."

That, it seems to me, was all one could expect from a girl like Léonie; so the matter was settled, and Jacques was as happy and proud as could be. Something in his way of holding his own kept Léonie's old admirers at a distance, and as to her moods, whatever they were, he accepted them. If she teased him, he bore it; and if she was silent, he sat and watched her with a look in his eyes that told you more than all the fine words a cleverer man might have found for his love.

"You're a lucky girl, Léonie Corseau," her friends said to her.

"There doesn't seem to me to be more luck on my side than on his," I heard her say once to this. "Perhaps not so much, if I am to believe all he tells me about myself."

"Good gracious! who do you want, if Jacques Lambert isn't good enough for you?"

"Who said I didn't think him good enough? But I'm sick of being told I'm lucky, as if I'd carried off what all of you wanted."

This was how matters stood when our new road was begun, with M. Paul Chastelain for the chief engineer.

We had had a good deal to say about this M. Chastelain before the works actually started. There had been some trouble about the survey; the first idea had been to bring the road across a bit of Lambert's land, for which, of course, he would have required proper compensation. All the

rest of the way it would be along the common land of the mountain. There was no reason why M. Chastelain should have made up his mind to save the Government the expense of Lambert's ground—he himself pocketed nothing by his economy; and to Lambert, with young Jacques' marriage on hand, the ready money would have been welcome. There was no personal feeling in the matter either, for we had scarcely seen the managing engineer before we knew that, instead of taking a cutting through Lambert's vineyard, the new road would follow the line of the path, which went scrambling over boulders, and across the boggy courses of mountain streams into the highway below. He must be a clever man, we said, who would undertake to make a broad road wind smoothly down that rough mountain slope; and clever M. Chastelain was, no doubt, though to look at him you would not have said so. He looked in no way notable; he was neither tall nor short; his figure was neither bad nor good—he looked wiry and flexible, but not a bit smart. He wasn't exactly ugly, yet in his best moments you couldn't say he was good-looking—everything about him seemed to me utterly uninteresting, especially his cold, blue eyes which gave a keen glance at you for a second, and then went back to a kind of indifference. He certainly hadn't the presence you'd think necessary to manage a couple of hundred workmen; yet he did manage them, and such orders as he gave, and such regulations as he made on the works, were strictly observed.

Before he came, he wrote to me saying that he should board with us, and he mentioned the price he meant to pay. It wasn't a high price, particularly for a time when lodgings were likely to be scarce. We prepared him a room in proportion to what he proposed paying.

"My good man," he cried, when he saw it, "do you think I can live in a cupboard? I must have room to turn round—my price is a fair one. I hope you don't imagine I mean to let myself be swindled."

"I have no wish to swindle, Monsieur," I said; "my other rooms are all let."

"There is the room over the kitchen, father," said Léonie, who stood by, "if Monsieur does not mind the smell of the cooking."

I gave her a frown; there was space in the room over the kitchen for three navvies' beds. We should lose considerably by such an exchange.

"That room," I began, "would have many inconveniences for Monsieur."

But he interrupted. "Not so many as this; anyhow, I will see." And forthwith he established himself in the biggest room in the house. When I began to scold Léonie afterwards, she said she had no mind to wait on an unlimited number of navvies, which wasn't so very unreasonable from her point of view; certainly, as I said to myself, it was not because she was so taken with M. Chastelain at first sight, that she did such a bad stroke of business.

A great many of the villagers found work on the new road. The Lamberts took a contract for blasting away the stone round the shoulder of the hill, and for conveying it to a place where a viaduct would have to be built across a wide gully. The distance from one to the other was a good kilometre, and it would have been a puzzle to most of us to say how the stone would be got from where it was quarried to where it was needed. M. Chastelain, however, soon settled that.

"He's having a double line of temporary rails laid," old Lambert explained to me, "along a dry water-course which goes as straight as an arrow from where we have to blast to the gully. The full truck running down the incline will pull the empty one up. All the machinery we want is a couple of good cog-wheels, and a few hundred mètres of cable. It's a capital idea, and I shall see if I can't manage to have such another laid from our own quarry to the river. It would pay me back in no time. He's a sharp fellow, is Chastelain, and knows his business."

Every one said this of him; but nothing more friendly. He gave himself no airs; yet no one seemed to take to him. Certainly, he made no advances to any one; he went about his work alone; he ate his meals alone; he smoked alone; and on Sundays he went for a long, solitary walk. He was the last man I should have expected Jacques Lambert to turn jealous of.

Nevertheless, one evening when I was busy in the bar, Jacques came to me, looking very savage. He called me aside, and said:

"Père Corseau, I want you to understand that I'll have no nonsense between Léonie and this young spark of an engineer."

If he hadn't been looking so angry, I should have laughed outright.

"Bless me, Jacques!" I cried; "what sort of nonsense do you mean? I've seen nothing between them."

"There's none so blind as those who won't see," he went on. "Surely you don't mean to say you can't see that for him she's quite a different girl?"

"Well," I said, "and what of that? He's a stranger to us, and a gentleman into the bargain; she can't treat him as she would one of her own station."

"That's just it," he said, more angrily than before; "he's a gentleman; but if I am not his equal, I'm not ashamed of the difference between us; and what's more, I'm not a man to let a promise be made into a plaything."

"Come, come, lad," I answered, "don't make such a fuss about nothing. What would Léonie say if she heard you?"

"It's time she did hear something. If you don't believe me, just come this way."

And he led me out across the courtyard to the garden gate. There he stopped.

"Well, Père Corseau," he began, "what do you think of that?"

"I see nothing so very wonderful," I replied. "The lass is gathering the early cherries to send to market to-morrow."

I spoke as coolly as I could, though I must confess I was a bit surprised to see M. Chastelain standing beside her, holding down the boughs while she gathered.

"But it isn't his business to gather cherries, and it isn't much in his line, either," said Jacques; "he wouldn't be gathering them by himself."

"Of course not," I said; "they aren't his to gather."

At that Jacques turned sharply round on me.

"I might as well have saved my breath," he said. "Of course you take her part. You think——"

But I stopped him.

"I'm not taking her part," I said; "indeed I see no need to; she's doing nothing at all to be ashamed of. They're scarce speaking to one another."

In fact, they weren't; moreover, M. Chastelain was drawing down the boughs with just the cool, indifferent air he always had. Yet, for all that, there was something that made me feel a little sorry for Jacques as I watched them; and that something was the look on Léonie's face. M. Chastelain did not seem to be aware of it; yet there it was—such an expression of perfect joy and contentment as I had never seen

her wear before, for Jacques or for any one. What did it mean, and where did the great happiness come from that shone round her?

I hadn't much time, however, for observation, for they heard our voices, and looked towards us. I fancied Léonie gave a start; certainly her face changed as she cried:

"Go and get a ladder, Jacques; there are plenty ripe on the upper boughs."

As to M. Chastelain, he gave no sign whatever of having been caught doing anything unusual.

"A fine crop of cherries, Père Corseau," he called out; and by the time Jacques came back with the ladder, he was gone.

"I could have come before if I'd known you'd wanted help," Jacques began, in a vexed tone.

"Better late than never," she answered, laughing; but she made no excuse for herself, nor did she say how it was that M. Chastelain came to be helping her.

After that, I kept my eye upon them; but I could see nothing that need have vexed the most jealous lover—certainly nothing that I could have interfered to stop. Once or twice I saw M. Chastelain stop to speak to her at the well, or while she was feeding the poultry; but who could forbid him to do that, especially with his quiet, unassuming manner?

In Léonie, however, there certainly was a change, which sometimes I tried to account for one way, sometimes another. Could it be that she had been hurt by Jacques' jealousy, or was it that she was beginning to tame down into what she would have to be as a married woman? Or could she be unhappy? Often she would sit with her hands in lap for half an hour. That wasn't like her restless nature; and when I rallied her, she would say: "I'm tired; there's such a lot to do with all these workmen about."

Then another day, when we tried to spare her, she would declare no one could do her work but herself; that if she had not plenty to do she felt dull. But principally I was worried by the way she treated Jacques. She left off all joking with him, and she never seemed to have a moment to spare for him.

"We're uncommon busy, Jacques," her mother would say sometimes by way of excuse; "the child's run off her legs."

"She can find time for doing what she likes to do," he answered more than once; and I knew what he meant. Léonie had

by degrees taken all the service for M. Chastelain into her own hands.

"You're not as civil to Jacques as you should be, child," I said to her. "Leave more of the work to Louise, and let him have a bit more of your company."

"But what's the good of sitting there? We have nothing to say to one another; and as to Louise, she can't be trusted to remember things, and M. Chastelain doesn't like her to do his room."

"Bother M. Chastelain," I said; "you've got to spend your life with Jacques. My child, I am not scolding you," I went on, for I saw her eyes were filled with tears. "Courtship is a serious matter, and a girl who has a good husband ready to take her should count herself lucky."

"I wish people would leave off calling me lucky," she cried, impatiently; "I'm sick of being called lucky."

Altogether one could feel that a storm was brewing, and it seemed to me that the sooner it broke and cleared the air the better.

"When they've had a good squabble and made it up, they'll understand one another better," I used to say to my wife, for I'd never been one to make mountains out of molehills, as Jacques seemed inclined to do.

Besides, when a man is busier than usual, he has to put family affairs out of his head, which was my case, particularly as our annual fair was coming on, which is always the busiest time of the year.

This fair falls on the fifteenth of August. It begins in the morning, with a procession through the village and high mass at the church, and it finishes in the evening with dancing, which, in those days, was always in the big club-room of the "Epée d'Or." Of course, there was a general holiday, and quite early Jacques came, dressed in his best, to walk with Léonie to church. He had taken it for granted that she would go, and he was more than a little vexed when he found her in the kitchen, a big blue apron round her, and her sleeves tucked up, trussing poultry for dinner. She laughed at him when he told her what he had come for.

"You should have spoken about it last night," she said, "and have saved yourself the disappointment. The fair-day is no holiday at the 'Epée d'Or,' and I should like to know who'd do my work if I began gallivanting at this time of day."

"Go along, child," her mother said;

"Louise and I will manage, and I'll call Marie Roux in if I want any one else."

But Léonie shook her head.

"What's the use of talking about Louise, you know she'll be outside chattering every time your back is turned—and Marie Roux has gone to church, I saw her go up the road with Joseph. Nay, Jacques, I can't go out this morning. Mother knows that as well as I do."

"She'll be able to go in the afternoon, Jacques," put in the mother. "And they say that the booths are finer than ever this year, and that there's a real theatre."

"Yes, mother's longing to see the theatre," Léonie said; but for herself she made no promise, and expressed no wish.

I was too busy myself all day long to take any note of anything; and in the evening, after the dancing had begun, my wife and I had our hands full pouring out drink, and counting change, or marking the score against those who did not pay ready money.

"If Léonie were here, she'd do this better than I can," I said, as I wrote something on the slate.

"I'm very glad she isn't here," my wife replied. "I had a job to persuade her we could do without her. But Jacques would have been very cross if she had kept away from the dancing."

She had scarcely spoken these words, when Jacques himself came into the bar.

"Where is Léonie?" he cried, angrily.

"No one knows anything about her. I won't be served so!"

"She isn't here, Jacques," I said, trying to look as if I didn't see how vexed he was. "I expect if she isn't among the dancers, that she's busy titivating."

"I expect she is," put in my wife; "it was late before she was free to go and make herself smart."

Jacques muttered something, then turned on his heel and went away. My wife followed him. A minute or two later she came back and touched me on the shoulder.

"Léon," she said, "go into the court for a minute. I can do without you. And perhaps you can stop it coming to a regular quarrel. Oh, dear, oh, dear! why need she worry him so?"

I made haste to do as she bade me, without asking any more particulars, picking and choosing as I went the words that I thought the most likely to smooth matters down. At the back door, however, I stopped, too much astonished at

what I saw by the light of the August moon to remember what I had meant to say. There, on the low parapet of the well, sat Léonie, in her workaday clothes, her elbows on her knees, and her face between her hands; behind her, leaning against the woodwork, stood M. Chastelain, an angry look on his usually calm face. In front of them, with his back toward me, was Jacques. I knew what he was looking like.

"You have been drinking, Lambert," M. Chastelain was saying, in a louder tone than I had ever heard him use; "if you were in your sober senses you would not dare say such things."

"I'm as sober as you are," shouted Jacques; "but who wouldn't say what I've said to the man who's done the mischief you've done? I love her a hundred times better than you ever could. What business have you there? Go away, I tell you, and leave her."

"You're not master here," replied the other, calmly; "and as you are not in a state to be left alone with Mademoiselle Léonie, I shall stay as long as you do."

"Then if you won't move, she shall. Léonie," he went on, his voice shaking with rage, "get up, and go into the house." She did not take any notice; he sprang forward towards her. At the same time M. Chastelain put himself in front of her, and crossed his arms over his chest. It was high time to interfere; a crowd was gathering by the fence, and I heard some one say, "If they fight, Jacques 'll pound him to a jelly."

"Jacques," I cried, hurrying across the yard, and placing myself between them, "Jacques, M. Chastelain, I can't stand by and see a quarrel of this sort when my daughter's at the bottom of it."

"It's not a quarrel, M. Corseau," rejoined Chastelain, quietly, "it is merely a tipay mistake of this rash fellow. Mademoiselle Léonie is no more to blame than you are. For her sake I will tell you all that has passed. I pass across the courtyard. I see her sitting by the well, evidently tired out with the laborious side of the merry-making. I wish her good-evening. I commend her wisdom in avoiding the fatigues of the dancing. All of a sudden swoops down her angry fiancé, loads us both with insults and reproaches, and makes an exhibition of himself generally. I am ready to excuse him on the ground that Aubazine Fair comes but once a year, and that the wine

one gets at the 'Epée d'Or' is a little heady; perhaps Mademoiselle Léonie will forgive him for the same reasons, if he promises to behave better for the future."

It was a wonder that Jacques had let M. Chastelain say all this without interruption; but he suddenly seemed to have grown as cool as the other.

"It is I who have something to forgive," he said, "and I'm not so sure I shall forgive it."

Then he turned and walked away with a firm step. In truth he was as sober as any of us. Léonie had slipped into the house directly I had come forward into the courtyard.

The next day, at ten minutes past twelve, M. Chastelain had not come in to his lunch. This was unusual. His hour was noon, and he was generally as punctual as the sun. Léonie, her face still troubled by last night's storm, kept taking anxious glances, now from the door, now from the window.

"Father," she said, presently, "what can be the matter? Not a man has come off the works yet, and people are going down the street all in that direction."

I went to the door. She was quite right. Instead of the usual midday rush of navvies into the village, the current seemed to be setting steadily the other way.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"There's been an accident where they are blasting," was the answer I got.

At which I started off too. When I reached the blasting there was no sign of anything wrong, except that workmen were standing about in knots, talking excitedly.

"Is any one hurt?" I asked.

"He's worse than hurt, Père Corseau," was the answer, "unless there's been a regular miracle."

"Who?" I asked.

Then I heard all. It was M. Chastelain, who had been coming up in the empty truck from the viaduct, as he mostly did when he wanted to save time. When he was within ten feet of the top, the rope had broken, and the truck had gone spinning over and over down to the gully below.

"Who was at the pulley?" I asked, for a terrible thought crossed me.

"Young Lambert," they told me.

Then, in the distance, we saw a crowd coming along. Some of the foremost carried a stretcher, which was covered over with their coats. The Lamberts were

walking side by side—the father holding the son by the arm.

"How is it with him?" we asked, looking towards the stretcher.

But no one spoke; there was no need of words—you could see how it was in their faces.

"Jacques," I whispered, going close to him, "Jacques, say it was an accident."

"It was, Père Corseau," he cried, looking at me pitifully. "Before Heaven, I hadn't a notion of what was going to happen till it was all over."

At that minute I pitied him almost more than the man who had died such a sudden, cruel death.

There was a terrible stir in the village, every one crowding round, women crying, men arguing in low tones about the accident; but Léonie was not to be seen.

When we—the two Lamberts and I—went into the house, there she stood. I took her hand and drew her aside to where we might be alone.

"Here's Jacques," I said to her; "he's in sad trouble. You've heard what's happened; it's your place to comfort him."

She drew her hands out of mine.

"To comfort him!" she cried. "No; never. I won't say you killed him," she went on, turning her white face towards Jacques. "Whether you did or did not, I'm not your judge; and no penalty you can pay will bring him back. But there's something I've got to say to you; I'd meant you to hear it to-day. I must say it all the more because he is dead. You thought he made love to me on the sly. Never once did he breathe a word of love to me; and he never would have done; he didn't love me. If you'd been as sharp as you thought you were, you'd have seen that. But I loved him; I was breaking my heart for him; and he didn't see it, either. I might have married you if he had never come. If I loved you as I loved him, it would make no difference to me that a man's life lies at your door. Now go away, and leave me all to myself."

Of course there was an enquiry into the manner in which M. Chastelain had met his death. Nothing, however, was proved against poor Jacques. Father and son were blamed for letting the rope wear thin; but it was urged in their defence that the line was for the transport of stones; that M. Chastelain had more than once been warned that he risked his limbs every time

he used it; that if the rope had broken in the ordinary course, the only damage would have been to a couple of trucks.

So Jacques was cleared; but that didn't make him happy again. He lingered about the village for a time, hoping that Léonie would soften to him; then, when all hope was over—when we'd laid her to rest in the cemetery—he went and enlisted in the artillery, and since then he has never been seen in Aubazine. Another engineer finished the new road; but I've never been along it to see what manner of road it is.

## A GARRISON ROMANCE.

By MRS. LEITH ADAMS (MRS. LAFFAN).

*Author of "Louis Draycott," "Geoffrey Stirling," "Aunt Hepsey's Foundling," etc.*

### CHAPTER XIII. "HOMEWARD BOUND."

CERTAINLY a good boat-load.

Private Doolan, number ten company, and his certainly much larger, if not better, half; Private Davenport, number one company; poor Polly Morrison, a slight figure all in black; and, last but not least—Butcher.

Butcher in a state of the wildest possible excitement and agitation. Of course there could be but one object in an expedition of this size—in Butcher's opinion—of course, they were going to seek for that missing master of his who had so evidently strayed away and got lost. During the morning it chanced that Butcher had come upon an old glove at Sir Peyton's—and seized upon it as some zealous paleontologist might seize upon a single bone of some extinct animal. It was not his master, but it was an integral part of him, and, as such, to be cherished and made much of. This very near resulted in Butcher eating the said glove altogether; but Davenport rescued it—at peril of his life, as it seemed, from those lusty fangs—though in a pulpy state impossible to describe. After this the old dog sulked a bit, but brightened up immensely when the boating expedition above-named was taken in hand.

You must know that, in a regiment, people are gregarious. They do things in groups. Nobody can do anything without somebody else—or even everybody else—helping. It is a way they have; and, believe me, it is not at all a bad way. Burdens are less heavy to carry when

many hands are put to them; and joys shine all the brighter for being shared. So satisfied was Butcher as to starting on this expedition, that he condescended to overlook and ignore the presence of Sweet Nancy, who, curled up between Doolan and his missis, every now and again gave a shrill yelp at the boatmen, evidently under the impression that they were doing something unlawful with the oars. We have said poor Polly was all in black; but the effect as a whole was a little patchy, and the bonnet on her head was a very veteran in bonnets, the startlingly white widow's cap beneath it showing up its shabbiness cruelly. The fact was that many had contributed articles of mourning attire, for the young widow's more seemly caparisoning. People in the poorer ranks of life have a touching longing to show respect for the dead in such ways, and hands and hearts are all open to help one another. I remember in the great cholera epidemic, when so many of our regimental children were orphaned, the neat black dresses in which the little creatures would appear on Sundays at our Garrison Chapel—the said dresses being provided by the men of the company to whom the dead and gone parents had belonged. In the same spirit—the Divine Spirit of sympathy that is the blessed fruit of sorrow—the women of the 193rd had put a hand, as they called it, to making Jack's girl tidy. How quiet and pale her face beneath the widow's cap! How closely little Joe—himself as black as any sloe, poor bairn! from head to foot—clung to her hand, never letting go even in the boat!

At once Butcher recognised the pathos of this small black figure, and licked Joe's dumpy fingers; at which Davenport took his pipe out of his mouth to say:

"Look there, ain't the dawg got sense, now?" to which Doolan grudgingly replied, "Shure, and the baste isn't a bad-manin' baste altogether," and the subject dropped, because Davenport's indignation was too deep for words. Davenport had been Jack's "comrade," or, as schoolboys would say, his "chum." His presence on the occasion under consideration was therefore natural. To account for Doolan and the missis is more difficult; but Doolan looked upon himself as indispensable, and Mrs. Doolan said that "one faymale wanted another faymale to stand by her in adversity—praise be!" and Polly said very little, but smiled a sad little smile at every one being so kind to her.

Polly was on her way to see Miss Mabel. She held a little paper tight, tight clasped in her hand. Her heavy eyes looked wistfully round. How brightly the sun shone; how gaily the water sparkled; there was the tuneful clash of a band in the distance, and Jack—Jack lay still and cold under the dark earth. Jack would "never come no more!"

In due time the boat reached the Sleima shore, and Doolan—Doolan only—went with Polly up to the Major's door. It took Davenport all his time to hold Butcher back by his gilt-nailed collar, for Butcher had come too often to Major Clutterbuck's with his master not to have suspicions that that gentleman might possibly be lurking somewhere about the premises. Nancie, too, was rebellious, and wriggled like a little eel on Mrs. Doolan's lap.

"Some of us came along wid her," said Doolan, explaining matters to Mrs. Clutterbuck in the doorway, and indicating Polly, who, trembling very much, asked to see Miss Mabel. "We were apprehensive," said Doolan, using his largest words, "that she might be taken wid a wakeness, so a sample of us came along wid her, my lady."

He stood stiff and rigid while thus addressing the Major's wife. The Major's soldier-servant, standing modestly in the background, was visibly impressed by his air and manner, and asked him to "step forward," and take a seat in the kitchen until Mrs. Morrison was ready to set off home again. But Doolan shook his head, and returned to his companions in the boat; not being in spirits to make himself socially agreeable just then.

Meanwhile, up in Mabel's room the women met—the widowed in life, and the widowed in heart.

If Polly had heard, shuddering, the shriek of the fife and the roll of the drum as Jack was borne to his last resting-place—had not the other, to the "sound of violins," buried the dear hopes of a day that was dead, the fond delights that were now but as stories told, or as a dream when one waketh in the morning?

Scarcely less white and wan than the new-made widow, looked Mabel Graham as she went forward to greet poor Polly.

"Why, how tired-like you look, Miss Mabel!" said Polly. "Maybe I did wrong to come; but I couldn't stay home with such a secret in my bress'; and the rest, they would come, too."

"A secret," said Mabel; "tell me what it is, Polly. No more sorrow, surely? We have had enough of that—we have supped full of it."

At another time, her young mistress's hopeless, stricken tone would have aroused Polly's fears; but just now she was too much engrossed with the secret to notice anything.

She pulled a narrow slip of paper out from the palm of her glove, and spread it on the table.

"Miss Mabel," she said, speaking not without a certain awe and fear, "they tell me this bit of paper, simple as it looks, is worth a matter of—fifty pound."

Mabel looked at the paper closely; she went on looking, until she could not see for tears.

It was a cheque for fifty pounds, and there was the plain, unpretending signature:

"Amphlett Jones."

"Why, Polly!" said Miss Graham, at last.

Then some strange impulse—Heaven knows what!—came over the girl. She bent down, and pressed her lips—how pale, how pale they were!—to the name at the foot of the little slip of paper.

Then she said, laying her hand on the other's shoulder, and looking her very gravely in the face:

"Polly, I am going to marry—Mr. Jones."

Polly made a strange gesture, wringing her hands one in the other.

"Miss Mabel," she said, "do you mean that? He is good, I'm sure—good and true; he couldn't hold out his lovin' hand to the widow and the fatherless if he wasna that. But oh, Miss Mabel, I thought—I was sure—"

"Never mind what you thought; never mind of what you were sure."

But the woman would not be silenced.

"Love is sweet," she said, "sweet as sweet. Don't I know that, as has lost it? A man may be good as good, but love is love. Ah, Miss Mabel, dear, forgive me! I make too bold. You know what Jack used to say—him as 'ull never come no more—' You're such a wench for talking, Polly—such a wench for talking; and it's true as true."

But Mabel put all this aside, very quietly, but very firmly. Was it not her work in life now and for ever to put from her all sentiment and tenderness, all that was "sweet as sweet," all the glamour of passion, all the joy of love?

"Tell me, Polly," she said, "what you are going to do with all this money. Tell me, too, how it was sent to you. Were you not amazed at such a stroke of luck befalling you?"

"You may say that," said Polly, stroking the magic slip of paper with a thoughtful hand; "Mrs. Doolan she fell into the wash-tub when she were first told, she did indeed; and Doolan, why, he danced a step or two of the double-shuffle—there's no man stands the regiment can do the double-shuffle like Doolan. Then he grew sorry-like, and axed my pardon for such a step, wi' Jack laid low; but he said the bit o' paper seemed like something sent right down from heaven, and got in his head; I reckon, Miss Mabel, it come straight from the heaven of a good man's heart—for I am sura he is a good man, Miss Mabel; and I wish you may be happy."

"Tell me, Polly," said her young mistress, quickly, "how did Mr. Jones send this to you?"

"Ah, miss, it was the doctor brought it, and he'd tears of joy in his eyes, that had he. It's Dr. Musters has the heart to feel for us all, same as though we were his own kith and kin. Why, when he cut Jimmy O'Brien's leg off, you'd have thought it was his own; and Jimmy were greatly comforted, and, when he come out of the sleep, his first word was to know would the leg have Christian burial. It weighed on his mind most of all to think of his leg being done by like as if it was a heathen; besides, some had told him if it weren't blest it 'ud never rise, and Jimmy thought he'd cut but a poor figure that way. But Doolan—eh, dear!—but Doolan's the clever lad—Doolan said, 'How about them as go down into the say?' says he. 'The leg's safe enough, the crathur,' says he. But la! la!" said Polly, breathless with the abstruse theological argument in which she had engaged, "how I do run on! I'd ought to have Jack to check me off, same as he'd used to—same as he'd used to—"

"And now, Polly," said Miss Mabel, "tell me, what are you going to do?"

"Going straight away home to mother, me, and little Joe, and the baby. Oh, Miss Mabel! it seems too good to be true. I have so dreaded that three months' kep' on the strength, and then your rations stopped, and . . . Well, well, I needn't think about it now, need I? But it seems strange to leave Jack behind; strange to

have seen him lying so still, with the curl in his hair like life, and the smile on his bonnie lips—the smile that death left for to greet me, that death couldn't take away."

At this juncture the door was flung open, and all sentiment put to flight by the arrival of the scramble, very much sobered by the remembrance of Jack's untimely end, it is true; but still the "scramble," and nothing but it. They were all round Polly in a moment, except Phil, who swarmed up into her arms by some process only known to her and himself, and hugged her as tight as wax. Phil went straight to the point, without any of that circumlocution which an older hand would have employed.

"I benny solly Jack be's drowned in the biggy sea, I do be's, de—ar Nurse Polly."

How she kissed him—how she cuddled him—how she cried over him! The other children, seeing this, tried to draw him away; but Polly wouldn't have it so. Indeed, Phil eventually accompanied her down to the boat, and was very gracious to its occupants, fearlessly patronising Butcher, and laying his little pinky palm upon that mighty head.

"Lord love him! Who'd hurt the likes of him?" said Davenport, when Mrs. Doolan showed signs of nervousness. "What d'you take the dawg for?"

Then the boat-load set off on its return journey, Jim, to the very last, most pressing in his enquiries as to whether the baby's eyes were open yet, which sent Doolan and Davenport into respectful convulsions, while Mrs. Doolan and Polly made signs of admiring astonishment to each other; Polly by no means sorry that one of her own "little gentlemen" should show off to such advantage.

It was later than the Major had expected when Mr. Jones arrived that afternoon. The Major had thought that a zealous and ardent lover would scarcely restrain his impatience of the empty hours passed away from the loved one's side. He met Mr. Jones almost at the landing-place, and told him that Mabel was in the drawing-room.

She was not there, but her lover—for indeed he was that, however unsuitable he might deem himself, however unsuitable other people might deem him—had not long to wait.

She came in, floating—so it seemed to him—on the golden shaded light, floating in like some white-robed angel,

beautiful, and sweet, and good. Every time he saw her freshly, he freshly wondered at his own audacity in having asked for such a gift from fortune. Every time he saw her freshly he made fresh resolves as to what he would do to try and make her happy—plans as to how he would think, and plan, and strive, and try, and crave of heaven the gift of wisdom, to know and to see what would please her best.

These had been his thoughts, his aspirations every time they met. What his thoughts were now, the future alone may reveal to us.

She came right up to him, close to him, so close, that for her to come like that of her own free will, set his heart throbbing, and his hands trembling, made him conscious of a thrill of delight. She laid her hand upon his arm.

"You have been so good—so good; I thank you for it in my heart of hearts."

Truth to tell he was somewhat embarrassed at this. He could not be sure what she was speaking of; he did not know how far, or how short, her knowledge went, of the way in which matters stood between himself and—the Major.

He took her hand gently in his own.

"If I have pleased you, I am very glad."

At the sound of his voice Mabel started. There is nothing that so subtly tells of a change in a man or woman's personality as the voice; for the human voice is an instrument of so exquisite a timbre that one inflection higher or lower, deeper or more restrained, alters the key of the whole music—or creates discord, as the case may be. There was no discord in the voice of Amphlett Jones, but, it was not the same voice as that to which Mabel had listened hitherto. Nor yet—hearken as she might—would she ever hear that voice again! Nay, as she looked at him earnestly in the faint light, she saw that his face was changed—marvellously, yet inexplicably changed. In the eyes was a strange, luminous light, a look of yearning, yet of fixed resolve. His eyes were the one fine feature Amphlett Jones possessed; the one gift a younger and handsomer man might have envied him. It seemed that the ruddy mottled colour had departed permanently from his cheek, and his lips were set and sad, yet with a sweetness of smile—when the smile came—that had something very touching and pathetic in it. His manner to Mabel was changed also. Something was gone, she could not

define what. His thought for her, his tenderness, his gentle ways, were all, as it were, things impersonal. They centred upon, and had reference to her alone. He seemed to stand apart, somewhere very far off; and as he watched her, he looked as we look when we are about to take an eternal leave of what is infinitely precious, but in which we have neither part nor lot.

"Polly has been . . ." said Mabel, drawing a long breath, and conscious of a little shiver even in the glow of that Malta day.

"Oh; it is that," said Mr. Jones. "That was a little pleasure I could not deny myself, and now you, too, are pleased—that is well."

He still held her hand—but loosely, looking at its pretty whiteness every now and then, as though it were some beautiful helpless creature he had captured, and would fain set free. Now and again he raised it, and touched it lightly with his lips; but even in this was no urgency of possession.

"Come here," he said, drawing her to the low couch by the window, "come and sit down beside me—I have something to tell you. . . ."

"There is nothing the matter—you are not ill?" said Mabel.

"Ill? Oh no—I have cast all that away since I came to your island. Dodson will be quite astonished with me when I get home—quite—and, by the way, that brings me to what I have to say—"

"Dodson brings you, do you mean?"

"Yes, Dodson. The fact is, Dodson wants me—which is, you must know, another way of saying that business wants me. I had not thought to leave you so soon. It is not the plan I had laid out for myself—not at all . . . not at all . . ."

He spoke in a low, dreamy way, new indeed for Mabel to observe in him—and his eyes gazed thoughtfully out at the garish bars of light seen through the blinds. He seemed to be watching something as we watch a funeral whose cortège carries out of our sight some precious thing—precious still, though no longer warm with life and love as once it has been.

"And you must go—now—at once—is that what you mean?" said Mabel, a pang of remorse cutting her like steel, as she was conscious of a sense of relief and coming freedom.

"No; not quite at once," he answered, with such a sad little smile that her shame

and self-reproach was deepened; "not quite at once. I cannot bank myself altogether of what I have coveted so much—I shall give myself"—this with a long, deep breath—"six whole days—then—Dodson and business—or—I ought to say, business and Dodson—shall have their way—"

When first the Major was told of this arrangement he looked grave, and got what his family called the "fidgets"; but after a long, and it must be supposed pleasant interview with Mr. Jones in the "den," took a brighter view of things, and sang with such a verve and charm that evening that the boys crept out of bed in their nightgowns to listen, making the stone stairway into quite a sort of amateur Jacob's ladder for the nonce. They had a real good time until Jim and Algie, fighting—in a most unangelic manner, it must be confessed—for the best place on the said ladder, damaged King Baby, and caused that monarch to air his grievances loudly and bring Mabel hurriedly to the rescue.

There was a bump the size of a pigeon's egg on the kingly brow, and brown paper, vinegar, and kisses had to be freely applied; not only so, but Phil had to be carried into the sitting-room and there held on sister's lap, to listen to Pap sing "The Minstrel Boy." Jim also slid in somehow—he was a very eel of a boy for slipping into places where he had no manner of business to be—and now being promoted to a sleeping-suit, considered himself fit for any society at any hour of the twenty-four. Nevertheless, he was glad to avail himself of the shadow of Mabel's chair, and, from that point of vantage, listen greedily to the melting tones of Pap's voice. He also thought fit to say, in a pig's whisper:

"D'ye know, Mab dear, Cap'en Rowan's going on leave, 'mediately—give you my word; the Honourable Bob said so. He said 'Bai Jove,' you know, he said it many times, 'I think Cap'en Rowan's about off by now. He's going to join again out in a new place—a place where it's always snowing, and stags walk about the streets,

and you shoot 'em, you know, just as you like,' that's what the Honourable Bob says, and he ought to know. He says he should like to go to that place, and shoot stags; but we haven't got the route, have we?—it's only the Brigade. I don't think Cap'en Rowan's going to come and say good-bye to us, do you? I call that mean. I think he's forgotted us a good lot lately."

Here Phil looked up with an aggrieved face, blinking from under his pent house of brown paper.

"Don't skees me so tight, Mabel," he said; "I can't get mine breff. I be's benny sad wis this sing on mine head, an' I can't be skeesed."

Jim proved to be right.

Captain Rowan did not come to say good-bye. He wrote a little letter to Mrs. Clutterbuck, but as nobody else saw it, nobody was the wiser. That dear lady's eyes were very red all the next day—a fact which the Major laboriously ignored—and the Honourable Bob and his friend Ginger, who looked in to tea, were in such a low state that every one was very glad when they went away, which they did in company with Mrs. Carbonel, who was not only low, but also frightened to note that Mabel carefully avoided holding any kind of speech with her, except in the full publicity of the assembled family.

Mrs. Carbonel was terribly aggrieved. She had done her best the night before to give Charley his chance; and nothing had come of it. She had hung about the door of that floral tent until forced away by a partner who would take no denial, and then, just as with a wild, final shriek the violins ceased to play, she had caught a glimpse of Captain Rowan's figure leaping into a boat—

Bah! what were the men made of! Would Fred—her Fred—have let her go like that? Not he! He would have taken her with him. Where? Oh, anywhere! What did it matter? And then, being by this time safe in her own room, Mrs. Carbonel had a "good cry," and vowed that she would never take an interest in a love-affair again.

#### NOTE.

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